

# Why Security Force Assistance Fails

A Monograph

by

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## **Abstract**

The nature of US armed conflict in the twenty-first century has seen a decrease in the use of force to exclusively achieve military end states in support of policy objectives. This forces military practitioners and policy makers to reconcile the differences between the military's traditional role of conducting combined arms maneuver and the recent trends of large-scale stability operations. During a period of fiscal austerity while the US military is relying on a rotational presence of forces to shape and deter conflict, the necessity of conducting security working by, with, and through US partners and allies remains at the forefront.

Effective security force assistance requires a convergence of regional interests between the United States and its partnered nations. It also requires a balance of capabilities to face both internal and external threats. After World War II, the United States established a group of advisors assigned to train and advise Korean police and army units, focusing on counter-guerilla and riot control techniques aimed at defeating Communist insurgent threats; South Korea then found itself embroiled in a conventional civil war time period. Iraqi Security Forces found themselves in a similar predicament, fighting a decentralized insurgency during the Coalition Forces occupation to then facing ISIL, an insurgent organization capable of fighting at the battalion level.

National policies, along with the strategies that implement them, are not static and are subject to change based on internal and regional dynamics. Effective security force assistance requires military practitioners and policy makers to adjust their strategies according to the environment. This requires planners to anticipate both internal and external threats in order to ensure a more sustainable outcome.

## Contents

Acronyms .....	v
Tables .....	vi
Introduction .....	1
Terminology .....	4
Security Cooperation Overview .....	8
Methodology .....	16
Korea 1945-1950 .....	18
Korea 1945-1950 Analysis .....	25
Iraq .....	28
Iraq Analysis .....	38
Conclusion.....	40
Bibliography .....	43

## Acronyms

Army Doctrine Publication	ADP
Counterinsurgency	CI
Conventional Warfare	CW
Department of Defense	DoD
Field Manual	FM
Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant	ISIL
Training and Doctrine	TRADOC
United States	US

## Tables

Security Force Assistance Criteria .....	18
Korea Variables .....	27
Iraq Variables .....	40

## Introduction

Although our forces will no longer be sized to conduct large-scale prolonged stability operations, we will preserve the expertise gained during the past ten years of counterinsurgency and stability operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. We will also protect the ability to regenerate capabilities that might be needed to meet future demands.

—2014 Quadrennial Defense Review

The nature of US armed conflict in the twenty-first century has seen a decrease in the use of force to exclusively achieve military end states in support of policy objectives; rather, policy makers used the military to directly achieve policy objectives.<sup>1</sup> This forces military practitioners and policy makers to reconcile the differences between the military's traditional role of conducting combined arms maneuver and the recent trends of large-scale stability operations. Additionally, recent spending caps on defense and a shift in US policy to decrease its presence in the Middle East in favor of a rebalancing towards the Pacific may indicate the United States is not looking to commit to a long-term presence of ground forces in any part of the world. An underlying assumption in this rebalancing of policy and force structure is an increased reliance on US allies, partners, and surrogate forces to accomplish policy goals. If there is any validity to that assumption then it is critical that the US Army visit its experiences in conducting security force assistance to determine better methods and practices for future conflicts.

In the contemporary environment where security cooperation becomes the norm in shaping and deterring conflict, short-term security gains should not be the only consideration factored into developing operational approaches. This paper examines how a lack of balance in training and a divergence of interests between the United States and the partnered nation lead to military failure. A failure to train and equip a partnered nation's army to face both internal and external threats, and a lack of commonality of regional security interests may result in military

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<sup>1</sup> Emile Simpson, *War From the Ground Up: Twenty-First Century Combat as Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 1.



failure. Failure to align US strategic aims and objectives with the partnered nation could result in ineffective security cooperation results. In order to determine the strategic picture, the United States must first define its own objectives while considering regional implications of its actions into consideration. The United States must also anticipate internal and regional threats to the partnered nation, and ensure the partnered nation as a set of balanced capabilities to face both.

A recent example of decreased US involvement in the Middle East is how the United States is carrying out its strategy against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). It has been the goal of the Obama Administration from the beginning of its fight against ISIL to enlist the support of neighboring Arab countries and provide US troops in an advisory capacity to Iraqi Security Forces.<sup>2</sup> Conducting this campaign with limited direct means, the United States relies on targeted airstrikes and special operations in Iraq and Syria as a means of containing the expansion of the terrorist organization. Meanwhile, Coalition troops train and equip Iraqi Security Forces as they prepare to expel ISIL forces from Iraq's borders. This process, however, requires time to yield results. Training qualified Iraqi troops is difficult enough; vetting credible opposition forces in Syria remains even more challenging. US Central Command Commander General Lloyd Austen recently testified that after several months of vetting and training a moderate Syrian opposition force to fight against Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's army, only a handful of fighters stand ready to fight.<sup>3</sup> The perils and pitfalls of relying on other forces to achieve policy objectives are self-evident in today's headlines.

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<sup>2</sup> "Mission Relunched," *The Economist*, September 27, 2014, accessed November 10, 2015, <http://www.economist.com/news/leaders/21620191-fight-against-islamic-state-will-help-define-americas-role-world-mission-relaunched>.

<sup>3</sup> Helene Cooper, "Few U.S.-Trained Syrians Still Fight ISIS, Senators are Told," *New York Times*, September 16, 2015, accessed February 28, 2016, [http://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/17/world/middleeast/isis-isil-syrians-senate-armed-services-committee.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/17/world/middleeast/isis-isil-syrians-senate-armed-services-committee.html?_r=0).

During a period of fiscal austerity while the US military is relying on a rotational presence of forces to shape and deter conflict, the necessity of working by, with, and through US partners and allies remains at the forefront. US Army's Training and Doctrine Pamphlet 525-3-1 *The US Army Operating Concept: Win in a Complex World* calls for the Army to remain regionally engaged and globally responsive through the concept of regional alignment.<sup>4</sup> It is an expansion of Army Doctrine Publication 3-0 *Unified Land Operations*, which states the importance land forces have in shaping and deterring conflict. This demonstrates the likelihood of Army forces working with partnered nations to fight and win our nation's wars.<sup>5</sup>

This new vision of the Army Operating Concept reveals an emphasis on Phase 0 *Shape* and Phase 1 *Deter* operations. By maintaining a presence forward throughout the Combatant Commands, the operating concept suggests Army forces will have already established inroads with partners and allies, easing a transition to Phase II *Seize the Initiative* should the need arise. Building partnership capacity through security assistance activities such as foreign internal defense, counterinsurgency, foreign military sales, or security cooperation aids a decline of forward basing for the United States and assures allies of US commitment to doing its part in deterring and winning conflict. The operating concept also acknowledges that coalition warfare will continue to be an integral part of US conflict in establishing legitimacy and providing additional power projection capability.<sup>6</sup>

However, conducting security assistance activities as a means to prevent or to intervene in conflict is by no means a fully proven concept. Aid in the form of money and training host

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<sup>4</sup> Training and Doctrine (TRADOC) Pamphlet 525-3-1, *The US Army Operating Concept: Win in a Complex World 2020-2040* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 2014), i.

<sup>5</sup> Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 3-0 *Unified Land Operations* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 2008), 14.

<sup>6</sup> TRADOC Pamphlet 525-3-1, iv.

nation forces is difficult, time-consuming, and requires an appreciation of the strategic picture as opposed to just the immediate operational threat. After World War II, the United States established a group of advisors assigned to train and advise Korean police and army units, focusing on counter-guerilla and riot control techniques aimed at defeating Communist insurgent threats; South Korea then found itself embroiled in a conventional civil war time period. Fighting a decentralized insurgency and settling sectarian scores consumed the Iraqi government, which is now facing an existential threat in ISIL, an insurgent organization capable of fighting at the battalion level.

### **Terminology**

Strengthening a US partnered nation through security, financial, and political reform is not a new concept. The United States preferred this strategy during the Cold War as a means to prevent the spread of Communism while limiting the risk of overt conflict. The post-Cold War world saw an increase in bolstering fledgling democratic states through financial, security, and diplomatic aid. Within the context of the Global War on Terror and other security threats such as Russia, security assistance funding continues in regions of Africa in terms of training, as well in Ukraine by means of training and non-lethal aid.

In order to examine the use of security assistance as a means to achieve US policy objectives, it is critical to first define the terms of usage. Due to the intrinsic similarities of security cooperation terms it easy to conflate them. The US Army defines security cooperation as “activities undertaken by the Department of Defense to encourage and enable international partners to work with the United States to achieve strategic objectives.”<sup>7</sup> In other words, security

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<sup>7</sup> Department of Defense Directive 5132.03, “DoD Policy and Responsibilities Relating to Security Cooperation,” October 24, 2008, 11.

cooperation is a means for Geographic Combatant Commanders to shape the security environment during Phase 0 of operations, which is consistent with the one of the Army's core competencies as stated in the Army Operation Concept *Win in a Complex World*.<sup>8</sup>

The US Army derives its role in security cooperation from an array of inputs beginning with the process of strategic direction. Strategic direction "encompasses the processes and manner by which the President and the Secretary of Defense provide strategic guidance to the joint force."<sup>9</sup> It includes a list of core documents produced that provide overarching policy goals including the National Security Strategy, National Defense Strategy, Quadrennial Defense Review, National Military Strategy, Guidance for the Employment of the Force, Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan, Global Force Management Implementation Guidance, and the theater campaign plan. The Geographic Combatant Command develops the theater campaign plan based on the aforementioned documents and other inputs such as presidential speeches and policy memorandums.

One component of the theater campaign plan is the theater security cooperation plan. It is within this document where the Army Service Component Commander can find explicit and implicit guidance on security cooperation activities. Within the umbrella of security cooperation lay an assortment of activities aimed at developing a partnered nation's economic, governmental, and security institutions. One particular aspect of security cooperation is security assistance. Security assistance provides defense articles, military training, and other defense-related services by grant, loan, credit sales, or lease, in furtherance of national policies and objectives.<sup>10</sup> Though

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<sup>8</sup> TRADOC Pamphlet 525-3-1, vi.

<sup>9</sup> Joint Publication (JP) 5-0, *Joint Operation Planning* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 2011), ix.

<sup>10</sup> Department of Defense Directive 5132.03, "DoD Policy and Responsibilities Relating to Security Cooperation", 11.

the Department of Defense plays an important role in conducting security assistance programs, other governmental agencies such as Department of State and United States Agency for International Development conduct security assistance programs as well. The Department of State, for example, funds programs such as foreign military sales and international military education and training while the Department of Defense implements them.<sup>11</sup>

Department of Defense executes multiple mission sets within the security assistance framework. One of these missions includes security force assistance. Security force assistance includes “activities that contribute to unified action by the US Government to support the development of the capacity and capability of foreign security forces and their supporting institutions.”<sup>12</sup> Security force assistance is a military solution and part of a greater strategy aimed at promoting regional US interests. It involves activities such as anti-terrorism training, international military education and training, and stability operations. Though in today’s context security force assistance is associated with counterinsurgency and stability operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, conflict is not a precondition in order to incorporate security force assistance as part of a security cooperation strategy. Security force assistance is where one of the Army’s core competencies, shape the security environment, comes to practice.<sup>13</sup> Through the concept of regional alignment, where Army divisions are normally aligned with a specific Geographic Combatant Command, units rotate in and out of theater conducting combined training exercises and establishing inroads for potential future conflicts in various regions.

The last component of security assistance where Department of Defense and the US

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<sup>11</sup> Michael J. McNerney et al., *Assessing Security Cooperation as a Preventive Tool* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2014), 3.

<sup>12</sup> Field Manual (FM) 3-22 *Army Support to Security Cooperation* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 2013), 497.

<sup>13</sup> TRADOC Pamphlet 525-3-1, vi.

Army play a significant role in is foreign internal defense. Foreign internal defense is the “participation by civilian and military agencies of a government in any of the action programs taken by another government or other designated organization to free and protect its society from subversion, lawlessness, insurgency, terrorism, and other threats to its security.”<sup>14</sup> US military doctrine associates foreign internal defense with irregular warfare, used primarily as a proactive means to shape and deter conflict, rather than a reaction to conflict.<sup>15</sup> Foreign internal defense may also include other governmental agencies focusing on political and economic assistance with the overarching purpose of stabilizing a particular country. The differences between security force assistance and foreign internal defense seem may appear subtle and nuanced. The case studies in this paper use a security force assistance framework.

Implicit within the entire security cooperation framework and its subordinate mission sets is another term relevant to the discussion of security cooperation: building partnership capacity. Though non-doctrinal, the United States introduced building partnership capacity at the height of wars in Afghanistan and Iraq in order to emphasize the importance of strengthening the host nation security forces. Building partnership capacity intuitively nests with security force assistance by developing the host nation’s security forces while concurrently reforming governmental institutions. Counterinsurgents would then be able to consolidate gains and build towards sustainable outcomes.

In sum, Combatant Commanders should receive the requisite guidance through the various outputs of strategic direction in order to produce a theater campaign plan. This campaign plan includes a strategy for implementing policy guidance on security cooperation activities, targeting specific countries or regions that reflect policy objectives. Some of these activities

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<sup>14</sup> FM 3-22, 490.

<sup>15</sup> Army Doctrine Reference Publication 3-05, *Special Operations* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 2012), 1-5.

involve indirect support to US partners and allies such as foreign military sales or grants. Other activities can include security force assistance or foreign internal defense which requires a rotational presence of US forces as well as the strategic and political consequences, both intended and unintended, that come with it.

### **Security Cooperation Overview**

With forward US military forward presence decreases, security cooperation continues to remain an important strategy in continuing a rotational presence around the world instead of a constant forward presence. It is therefore not surprising that there is a vast amount of literature written on security assistance and its unintended consequences. This section will provide a brief historical overview of US security cooperation missions starting since the Cold War, followed by a review of specific literature that covers security cooperation within the Global War on Terror.

By the time the Allies announced Victory Europe on May 8, 1945, the US Army alone had roughly 1.9 million soldiers on the continent, occupying most of Western Europe.<sup>16</sup> After experiencing six years of war that destroyed infrastructure and expended human and financial capital, Europe was in great need of economic, diplomatic, and military assistance. The Soviet Union, having seized more territory and killed more Germans than the Allies combined at the expense of twenty-six million people, would occupy what US diplomat George Kennan referred to as “a wide military and political *glacis* on [Stalin’s] western front.”<sup>17</sup> The fragile state of Western Europe laid bare the threat of communist expansion. In his famous “Long Telegram,” George Kennan highlighted Stalin’s expansionist ambitions and recommended a policy of

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<sup>16</sup> <http://www.eur.army.mil/organization/history.htm>, accessed November 17, 2015.

<sup>17</sup> Rick Atkinson, *The Guns at Last Light: The War in Western Europe 1944-1945* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2013), 523.

containment until the Soviet people withdrew their support of Stalin's aggressive policies.<sup>18</sup>

The recognition of Soviet expansion propagated US policy known as the Truman Doctrine, which called for economic and military assistance to countries experiencing attempted communist subversion.<sup>19</sup> One of the first tests of this doctrine was in the security assistance the United States provided to Turkey and Greece, which helped stabilize both countries and set conditions for later admission into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Soviet development of atomic weaponry and attempted communist subversion in US-occupied South Korea provided more ammunition for Truman to justify his policy. The containment strategy writ large was solidified with the development of National Security Council-68 in April of 1950, outlining a policy of "attempting to develop a healthy international community" and a policy of "containing" the Soviet system."<sup>20</sup>

Direct military intervention, a precondition for security force assistance, was not a consistent tool used in implementing the containment strategy, however. Though Korea and Vietnam remain as two prominent examples of direct security assistance through economic and financial means, the Eisenhower administration's adoption of the New Look, which "was to achieve the maximum possible deterrence of communism at the minimum possible cost," involved a heavy reliance on a nuclear weapons arsenal potentially delivered by ballistic missiles and bombers.<sup>21</sup> A similar lull in direct intervention came about at the conclusion of the Vietnam War after a vast expenditure of US human, economic, and political capital. Nonetheless, US

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<sup>18</sup> Paul H. Nitze, *NSC 68: Forging the Strategy of Containment*, ed. S. Nelson Drew (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1996), 8.

<sup>19</sup> Nitze, *NSC 68: Forging the Strategy of Containment*, 9.

<sup>20</sup> National Security Council-68, April 14, 1950, 21.

<sup>21</sup> John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of American National Security Policy During the Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 162.



policymakers continued to pursue “softer” approaches to security assistance. During the Reagan administration, the United States sought to subvert existing Communist regimes in Angola, Afghanistan, Cambodia, and Nicaragua through covert financial and military support.<sup>22</sup>

The United States continued to use security assistance as a strategy to bolster weak states during the post-Cold War countries such as Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, and Kosovo. Though the Soviet Union had collapsed and the threat of communism was minimal, US policy makers struggled to reconcile their values with US interests. Security assistance no longer served as a strategy to counter an existential threat; it was used a means to spread democracy, and in some cases, prevent the slaughtering of innocent civilians. During the Global War on Terror, the United States implemented security cooperation towards strengthening internal state security. Countries that could not or would not control activities within its own borders became targets of opportunity for US policymakers. Some countries reaped the benefits of security cooperation through money, training, and foreign military sales due to its geography or positioning to relative security threats. The United States targeted other countries such as Pakistan for security cooperation due to its proximity to Afghanistan, its possession of nuclear weapons, and its inability to control its tribal areas.

Though the term security cooperation is relatively new, its practice is not. Delivering economic and military aid to countries in support of policy objectives has been a strategy since the Cold War. The United States can use this strategy as a preventive tool as was the case initially in Korea before the situation transitioned into a conventional conflict. The United States can also use it as a means to intervene, as was the case in the US occupation of Iraq. This section explores doctrinal gaps in the planning and assessment of security cooperation activities, and examines recently published literature on security cooperation as both a preventive tool and as a means for

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<sup>22</sup> Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of American National Security Policy During the Cold War*, 371.

intervention.

A recent article in *Joint Forces Quarterly* identified gaps in incorporating theater security cooperation strategies into the combatant commander's theater campaign plan. The article acknowledged that since the Global War on Terror, the Department of Defense has made strides in clarifying policy to military practitioners and began regularly publishing specific guidance on security cooperation as part of the regular outputs and documents provided through strategic direction. Two documents that have helped clarify security cooperation guidance are DoD Directive 5132.03 *Department of Defense Policy and Responsibilities Relating to Security Cooperation* and *Security Cooperation Guidance*.<sup>23</sup> Both of these documents, along with the outputs of strategic direction, provide guidance on the implementation of strategy. What they do not do, however, is provide a methodology for commanders and staffs to cognitively link strategy to effective security cooperation. In a time of shrinking budgets without a commensurate reduction in requirements, determining where to effectively allocate resources within the Joint Operations Area becomes problematic.

The methodology included in this article provides a way in developing an operational approach with the intent of avoiding unintended consequences of conducting security cooperation activities. This approach suggests commanders and staffs

identify...long-time allies and partners with the United States, determine those nations with a geographic strategic advantage in achieving US national strategic objectives, determine who else can help in this effort, identify willing partners, define the specific objectives of security cooperation activities, evaluate the likelihood of success of any engagement or series of engagements, make the thoughtful choices on where and how to engage, assess the effectiveness of the thoughtful choices, reframe, and adjust security cooperation approach as necessary.<sup>24</sup>

Though the scope of the article is limited, it provides a cognitive tool for planners to use as a

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<sup>23</sup> Robert C. Coon et al., "Defense Strategic Guidance: Thoughtful Choices and Security Cooperation," *Joint Forces Quarterly*, Issue 74 (3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter 2014): 73.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.

debarkation point when developing operational approaches for security cooperation activities. While this methodology may distill clarity for planners trying to allocate resources, finding long-term partners and allies with common regional interests is no small task and requires continuous diplomatic engagement and assessment.

National policies, along with the strategies that implement them, are not static and are subject to change based on internal and regional dynamics. Providing security assistance in the South Caucasus region from 2002 to 2009, the authors of one study focused on one strategy that produced strategic unintended consequences. The United States provided security assistance in the form of counterinsurgency training and foreign military sales to Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia creating an influx in economic and military aid to bolster regional security and promote President George W. Bush Administration's agenda of spreading liberal democracy as a means to eliminate terrorist safe havens.

Regardless of US intentions, partnered nations may interpret security assistance differently.<sup>25</sup> In Georgia, for example, the United States began providing money and training of Georgian army forces in order to improve internal security by fighting terrorism and securing critical energy infrastructure. The US expanded its program to advise, train, and assist Georgian security forces in preparation for deployment in Operation Iraqi Freedom. US security force assistance efforts there focused on counterinsurgency small unit tactics. However, while the United States may have thought they were merely shoring up internal defense and preparing a security partner to go to war, the Georgians ended up with a different interpretation of the security assistance package pursuant to their national interests.<sup>26</sup> As the article notes, "the

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<sup>25</sup> Michael D. Mihalka and Mark R. Wilcox, "Unintended Strategic Consequences of Security Assistance in the South Caucasus," *Joint Forces Quarterly*, Issue 57 (2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter 2010): 27.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

Georgians quite simply see any training of their troops as helping them with general defense and are not as sensitive to nuance.”<sup>27</sup>

Not only can the beneficiary interpret security assistance differently than intended, but security assistance can also have repercussions with neighboring actors as well, as was the case with Russia. Although US policy involved promoting liberal democratic institutions while simultaneously implementing security sector reforms, Russia’s interpretation of the increased funding with respect to its southern neighbors fueled further mistrust over the ongoing territorial disputes in South Ossetia and Abkhazia. This reveals perhaps one of those critical factors to successful security assistance outcomes: proper alignment of US and partnered nation objectives. Though it is critical, this can also be decidedly difficult, “especially when the intersection of interests is limited or nuanced.”<sup>28</sup>

Pakistan serves as another recent example of post-9/11 security assistance. The United States recognized Pakistan’s strategic importance for gaining access to Afghanistan and denying terrorist safe havens, and began significantly increasing its foreign aid. The United States rekindled its ties with Pakistan from the Cold War by spending approximately \$18.5 billion in security sector reform alone from 2002 to 2014.<sup>29</sup> The United States intended to fund Pakistan with the intent of controlling the semi-autonomous region in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. This unfortunately only treats the symptoms of a larger issue of Pakistan’s weak democratic institutions, human trafficking, drug smuggling, and militant Islamic sentiment, all of

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>28</sup> Christopher Paul, et. al., *What Works Best When Building Partner Capacity in Challenging Contexts?* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2015), xix.

<sup>29</sup> Aid to Pakistan by the Numbers, accessed March 28, 2016, <http://www.cgdev.org/page/aid-pakistan-numbers>.

which can undermine current US efforts to strengthen security institutions.<sup>30</sup> Focusing primarily on counter-terrorism in the Federally Administered Tribal Area at the expense of civil institutions has had a destabilizing effect overall in Pakistan. By supporting these institutions of hard power, the United States creates an imbalance on its investment in security.<sup>31</sup> Without making a concerted effort to ameliorate some of the underlying causes of militant Islam in Pakistan, there is little reason to think the billions of dollars the United States is providing Pakistan will bear fruit in the long-term.

The United States currently implements security force assistance in Afghanistan while simultaneously conducting a counterinsurgency campaign. This differs from the previous two examples and raises a unique challenge to planners and is not unique to Afghanistan. Indeed, the United States military faces the same problem of structuring its organizations to face decentralized, insurgent networks while preparing for conventional threats. Conducting this while fighting an insurgency on foreign soil in an unfamiliar environment can create operational and tactical disconnects between the generating force and the operating force, as well as some flaws in the use of assessments to measure progress.<sup>32</sup>

Another important aspect of security assistance in Afghanistan that perhaps rings true of any operation involving training foreign security forces is the idea of mirror imaging of security forces in accordance with Western political and social values. While placing security forces subordinate to civilian control is consistent with Western liberal democratic values, it has

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<sup>30</sup> C. Christine Fair and Peter Chalk, *Fortifying Pakistan: The Role of US Internal Security Assistance* (Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2006), 58.

<sup>31</sup> Mihalka and Wilcox, “Unintended Strategic Consequences of Security Assistance in the South Caucasus,” 71.

<sup>32</sup> Terrence K. Kelly, et. al., *Security Force Assistance in Afghanistan: Identifying Lessons for Future Efforts* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2011), xvii.

different implications in a country like Afghanistan where loyalty resides with a tribal society structure. The implications of building up security forces under a political structure that favors tribal loyalty over Western political structures may only serve the existing regime's interests, allowing it to consolidate power over time.<sup>33</sup> In other words, strengthening a country's security apparatus creates an imbalanced force structure relative to the political institutions in place to control it. As result, this precludes overall progression towards a legitimate government with balanced power structures.

When the US conducts activities designed to strengthen government and security institutions, however, two key factors come into play: relationships and time.<sup>34</sup> These two critical findings lend credibility to the idea that creating the desired effects in a state with weak government and security institutions requires longevity and persistence. This runs counter to the 2014 Quadrennial Defense Review, which states that DoD will no longer be structured to conduct long-term stability operations.

Intentions, whether for short-term or for long-term gains, should be clearly defined and understood by both parties prior to committing resources to security cooperation. One report states, "how security forces are structured and developed should, in principle, reflect the threats faced by a society."<sup>35</sup> When US and the partnered nation's intentions are not in line, such as the case in Georgia in 2008, it can lead to unintended strategic consequences. This paper argues that in the Global War on Terror where security cooperation becomes the norm in shaping and deterring conflict, short-term security gains should not be the only consideration factored into

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<sup>33</sup> Kelly, *Security Force Assistance in Afghanistan: Identifying Lessons for Future Efforts*, 111.

<sup>34</sup> Paul, et al., *What Works Best When Building Partner Capacity in Challenging Contexts?* 4.

<sup>35</sup> Kelly, *Security Force Assistance in Afghanistan: Identifying Lessons for Future Efforts*, 5.

developing operational approaches.

If policymakers and practitioners fail to take both the US and the partnered nation's strategic picture when conducting security cooperation activities, it could result in ineffective security cooperation. In order to determine the strategic picture, the United States must first define its own objectives and end states while taking regional and global implications of its actions into consideration. The United States must also have a firm grasp of its partnered nation's view of intended outcomes of the security cooperation activities.

Understanding the strategic context is never easy and changes in context are difficult to forecast. The United States conducts security cooperation within the context of the Global War on Terror as a means to ameliorate immediate security concerns or to gain access to a neighboring country. With regional stability as the objective, the United States usually opts for methods such as training or foreign military sales to yield immediate, concrete gains. Though both methods of security assistance can be beneficial towards greater stability, long-term development in democratic institutions and investing in infrastructure and human capital reap long-term, though intangible, benefits. The inherent difficulty in assessing the efficacy of such long-term investments, however, prevents lawmakers from continuing to fund such endeavors.

### **Methodology**

A qualitative historical case study methodology uses two variables derived from theoretical perspectives from the security cooperation literature. The first variable is the relative commonality of interests the United States has in relation to the partnered nation. The commonality of interests variable examines how the United States and the partnered nation's interests converged or diverged over time. The second variable is the type of training the partnered nation receives and whether or not it is sufficient to defend against threats that are internal and external to the country. The training variable is divided into components:

conventional warfare (CW) training and counterinsurgency (CI) training. The intent is not to weigh the amount of training in types of units or equipment issues, but to determine whether or not US advisors attempted to maintain a balance between dealing with current threats and anticipating future ones. Differences in conventional training vice counterinsurgency training are nuanced. Both have the same organizational building blocks of squad, platoons, and companies and require the fundamental competencies of any combat organization to shoot, move, and communicate. Counterinsurgency training differs from conventional warfare in terms of mind set and risk taking; counterinsurgents tend to be more decentralized, placing as much emphasis on intelligence gathering and protecting populations as lethality.

Two specific criteria went into selecting case studies to test the hypothesis: post-World War II security cooperation activities and cases where the security cooperation at least initially failed. Failure here is defined as an inability to secure borders. This paper uses US involvement in Korea from 1945-1950, before the North Korean incursion south of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, as the first case. Though the US strategy in Korea was ultimately successful in creating a democratic state with strong economic and cultural ties to the United States, this success did not come easy and only after the recognition of failure from previous attempts at security cooperation in South Korea.

Because security cooperation is a contemporary term, this paper also uses a case study that occurred post-9/11. Within the Global War on Terror are several instances where security cooperation funding increased significantly in pursuit of US interests. This paper uses Operation Iraqi Freedom over Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Freedom's Sentinel due to a more complete data set. Selecting one case study within the strategic framework of the Cold War paradigm provides the added perspective of nuclear deterrence looming in the background. Selecting a recent case study from the Global War on Terror provides a more current perspective on how non-existential threats such as al Qaeda shape US operational approaches with respect to



security cooperation.

Each case study examines two input variables, commonality of interests  $x_1$  and type of training  $x_2$ . The output variable, military failure  $y$ , demonstrates the correlation between a lack of commonality of interests and inadequate training to prevent military failure. The chart below is displayed to show how the two input variables are evaluated against the output variable.

#### Security Force Assistance Criteria

Case Study	Commonality of Regional Interests $x_1$ (Convergent, Divergent)	Type of Training $x_2$ (CW, CI, Both)	Military Failure $y$ (Failure to control borders)
Country A			
Country B			

Source: Created by author

### **Korea 1945-1950**

The Korean War is often regarded within the context of the Cold War as President Truman's first true test of the Truman Doctrine and its policy of containment. In terms of grand strategy, the Truman Doctrine resulted in economic and military assistance to more than one hundred countries, the establishment of North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and a global presence for the United States in its stand against the further spread of Communism.<sup>36</sup> Viewing the Korean War through this lens is important, but it is equally important to highlight the civil conflict carried

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<sup>36</sup> Lamont Colucci, *The National Security Doctrines of the American Presidency: How They Shape Our Present and Future, Volume Two* (Denver: Praeger, 2012), 312.

out by the Korean people over two competing visions of a modern Korea.<sup>37</sup> To be sure, Soviet, Chinese, and US involvement facilitated further polarization of Korea, but it would be disingenuous not to acknowledge the division the Korean people had before Western intervention in 1950. In fact, the Korean Civil War began in 1948 as a Phase II insurgency of Mao's People's War.<sup>38</sup>

Though the world reacted with surprise when the Korean People's Army of the Democratic Republic of Korea attacked across the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel into the Republic of Korea on June 25, 1950, the signs of an impending conflict had loomed large during the US and Soviet occupation of post-WWII Korea from 1945-1950. Limiting the case study to 1945-1950 provides insights into US security cooperation practices that ultimately failed with the invasion of South Korea. Although the United States reestablished South Korean sovereignty under a United Nations mandate, it required a significant adjustment of strategy for the US to achieve its policy end of a free and democratic South Korea.

At the Yalta Conference in 1945, the United States and Soviet Union agreed they would ensure Korea would become free and independent with a United States-Soviet Union-China "trusteeship," offering no clarification on what that would look like.<sup>39</sup> With the demilitarization and future defense of Japan at the forefront of US policy in the Far East, Washington quickly realized the implications of a Soviet-occupied Korean peninsula. Once Japan surrendered, the United States created two zones of occupation with the line demarcation residing at the establishment of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, placing the US in the south and the Soviets in the north.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Allan R. Millett, *The War for Korea, 1945-1950: A House Burning* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2005), 7.

<sup>38</sup> Millett, *The War for Korea, 1945-1950: A House Burning*, 135.

<sup>39</sup> Don Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 5.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

Though the division seemed arbitrary at the time, it served as one of the first manifestations of a US policy of Soviet containment.

The immediate concern of Douglas MacArthur, then Commander, United States Army Forces, Pacific, was that a defeated foe, Japan, still occupied and exercised control of the Korean peninsula. MacArthur appointed LTG John H. Hodge as Commanding General, US Army Forces in Korea, and established the XXIV Corps Headquarters with the 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 40<sup>th</sup> Infantry Divisions as an occupation force. Hodge then established the US Army Military Government in Korea to oversee the disarmament and repatriation of Japanese occupiers.<sup>41</sup> Hodge thought that disintegrating all aspects of Japanese administrative and bureaucratic institutions in Korea would lead to further disorder and chaos. In light of this, Hodge instituted a policy that disarmed Japanese security forces but left the bureaucracy intact until the Koreans could stand up a functioning government. This quickly drew the ire of Korean citizens and the press, forcing Hodge to throw out the current policy and give United States Military Government in Korea primacy in governance of Korea south of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel.<sup>42</sup>

With the sinews of order now removed, it became apparent to US occupiers there needed to be an internal security apparatus to maintain civil security. United States Forces in Korea, with its one corps of three divisions spread thin throughout the country, sought to share the burden of security with its Korean counterparts. The US military government therefore established the Korean National Police comprised of twenty-five thousand men, some of whom were returning Army veterans.<sup>43</sup> The Korean National Police served as South Korea's primary security

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<sup>41</sup> Robert K. Sawyer, *Military Advisors in Korea: KMAG in Peace and War*, ed. Walter G. Hermes (Washington DC: US Government Printing Office, 1962), 7.

<sup>42</sup> Bruce Cummings, *The Origins of the Korean War: Liberation and the Emergence of Separate Regimes, 1945-1947* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 139.

<sup>43</sup> Millett, *The War for Korea, 1945-1950: A House Burning*, 60.

apparatus, though Hodge, realizing this would not suffice, established the Korean Constabulary, a twenty-five thousand “police reserve” to supplement the Korean National Police.<sup>44</sup> Washington, sensitive to a potential Soviet protest on creating a standing military, emphasized to Hodge that the primary focus for training the Constabulary was riot control and counter-guerilla techniques.<sup>45</sup>

The establishment of both security apparatuses unfortunately did not prove effective. In August of 1946, a series of violent protests erupted in the American zone. Korean citizens fed up with occupation of any foreign country, US or otherwise, demonstrated their disdain for the US occupation force. A cholera pandemic, rising food prices, and falling wages fueled a series of riots resulting in violent clashes with the US troops, Korean National Police, and Constabulary on one side, and disenchanted citizens on the other.<sup>46</sup> The Democratic People’s Front, a leftist coalition with Communist leadership, played a part in organization of the protests, highlighting a larger concern of Communist influence within South Korea. An ineffective military occupation force incapable of governance became a recruiting tool for leftist guerilla organizations such as the South Korea Labor Party. The threat of Communist-leaning organizations focused attention on the internal threats to South Korea and provided impetus to increase the size of the Constabulary, which Hodge envisioned transitioning into the Republic of Korea Army.<sup>47</sup>

With civil unrest plaguing the US occupation, it was clear that a US-led political solution would not suffice; Korean citizens deemed any United States Military Government in Korea policy to have dubious intentions. Part of the unrest can be attributed to US policy towards Korea

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 77.

<sup>45</sup> Cummings, *The Origins of the Korean War: Liberation and the Emergence of Separate Regimes, 1945-1947*, 177.

<sup>46</sup> Sheila Miyoshi Jager, *Brothers at War: The Unending Conflict in Korea* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 2013), 46.

<sup>47</sup> Allan R. Millet, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951: They Came from the North* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2010), 106.

and its vision of a “trusteeship” between the Soviet Union and the United States.<sup>48</sup> The Korean people, however, rejected the notion of trusteeship, revealing to the US military government that the situation required a Korean political solution. After a US-Soviet Joint Commission in the summer of 1947 failed to provide results, Hodge called for a reevaluation of current US policy towards Korea: “I have always been aware that Korea has been low on the agenda of national foreign policy, but I feel that the situation here is reaching the point where Washington must become aware that it may soon reach the point of explosion.”<sup>49</sup>

In an attempt to ward off an impending “explosion,” the United States deferred the Korean question to the United Nations General Assembly, calling for the establishment of a temporary commission to oversee elections for the Korean peninsula.<sup>50</sup> The Soviet Union understandably countered the US proposition with one of its own, calling for a withdrawal of US and Soviet troops from the peninsula by 1948. The US proposition passed while the Soviet proposition did not garner enough votes.<sup>51</sup> This provided the Truman Administration breathing room, alleviating pressure from the increasingly unpopular United States Military Government in Korea. Not only did it provide maneuver space, it legitimized, from the Truman Administration’s point of view at least, a US drawdown and eventual withdrawal from the Korean peninsula.

The United Nations commission oversaw democratic elections in South Korea in May 1948, electing Syngman Rhee. North Korea, refusing to participate, held elections of their own in

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<sup>48</sup> Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas*, 5.

<sup>49</sup> James F. Schnabel, *United States Army in the Korean War, Policy and Direction: The First Year* (Washington DC: Government Printing Press, 1972), 25.

<sup>50</sup> United States Department of State, *Korea, 1945-1948: A Report on Political Developments and Economic Resources with Selected Documents* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1948), 7.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid*, 8.

August of 1948, electing Kim Il-Sung.<sup>52</sup> The West and Soviet Union divided the Korean peninsula in practice; now the United Nations officially recognized this division. The United States Military Government in Korea's mission concluded with the inauguration of Rhee and the establishment of a democratically elected government.<sup>53</sup> The Soviet Union, as part of its proposed United Nations resolution, began withdrawing its troops from North Korea. With the post-World War II drawdown and shrinking defense budgets, MacArthur began moving divisions from Korea, leaving one Regimental Combat Team of 7,500 soldiers to train, advise, and equip the Korean National Police and the Korean Constabulary.<sup>54</sup>

With a new government in place, the fledgling democracy faced no easy task. While the United Nations commission prepared for upcoming elections in the summer of 1948, leftist guerilla organizations such as the South Korean Labor Party drew the attention of the Korean Constabulary. The growing Communist insurgent threat and the fear of provoking a Soviet response compelled the United States and South Korea to focus security force assistance efforts on building and training a force that could conduct counter-guerilla and riot control operations. Beginning in the spring of 1948 and ending over a year later, Constabulary forces conducted a campaign against South Korean Labor Party guerillas, including a series of engagements on Cheju-do island off the southern tip of South Korea. During the Cheju-do battle, approximately 7,000 Korean Constabulary soldiers, guerillas, and civilians died.<sup>55</sup>

A growing Communist insurgency, the steady withdrawal of US troops, border clashes

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<sup>52</sup> Korea Institute of Military History, *The Korean War: Volume 1* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 29-30.

<sup>53</sup> Schnabel, *United States Army in the Korean War, Policy and Direction: The First Year*, 28.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, 30.

<sup>55</sup> Millet, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951: They Came from the North*, 203.

with the Korean People's Army, and a struggling South Korean economy worried Syngman Rhee. Rhee penned a letter to the US ambassador and the United Nations, decrying the dearth of equipment his army had to defend itself against an invasion. Rhee's estimation deemed South Korea's security needs more important than economic development, even arguing that a preemptive attack north to unify the Korean peninsula would be better than waiting for an attack.<sup>56</sup> The presence of US Army advisors in Korea, now renamed the Korean Military Advisory Group, may have given Rhee impetus to increase funding and prepare an Army capable of defeating the Korean People's Army and unifying the Korean peninsula. Rhee understood that his country relied on "foreign patronage" to remain a viable state, and sought an increase from the already existing training and advising framework to increase the power of his country.<sup>57</sup>

Under a new policy, the Truman Administration acknowledged South Korea's vulnerabilities concerning its military strength and pledged to assist, increasing the total end strength of Korean soldiers, sailors, and national policemen to 114,000, with the caveat that under no circumstance was Rhee to use his new Army for preemptive purposes against North Korea.<sup>58</sup> National Security Council 8/1 further called for the evacuation of all combat troops by July of 1949 with the small Korean Military Advisory Group contingent remaining in place.

When news broke of a Korean People's Army invasion of South Korea, Truman and his advisors faced a monumental decision: do they withdraw all US troops from South Korea and allow events to unfold, or make a stand in accordance with Truman's policy memorandum, National Security Council 68? Truman chose the latter, securing a United Nations Security Council resolution condemning the invasion and providing the United States and its allies

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<sup>56</sup> Robert T. Oliver, *Syngman Rhee and American Involvement in Korea, 1942-1960* (Seoul: Panmun Book Company Ltd., 1978), 249.

<sup>57</sup> Millet, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951: They Came from the North*, 176.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid, 190.

legitimacy in restoring the international boundary.

### **Korea 1945-1950 Analysis**

United States security assistance to South Korea from 1945-1950 sought to create a stable and democratic country that serve as a counter to Soviet aggression in East Asia. Leaving the peninsula to Soviet and Chinese devices would have run counter to the trusteeship Roosevelt envisioned at Casablanca. Unfortunately, the concept of trusteeship for Korea never received the same attention to detail in post-war occupation planning as Japan. MacArthur sent Hodge and XXIV Corps to assume a role neither Hodge nor his command was structured to do: oversee post-war transition to civilian authority while extricating an occupying power, and with it, bureaucratic institutions. To be sure, the enormity of Hodge's task and the dearth of resources given hindered his command's abilities to provide adequate security and governance.

Misguided as Rhee was on his vision of uniting the Korean peninsula, he was certainly not out of touch with the threat his country faced. Communist insurgent activity continued to drain resources from the constabulary and police. From April 1- August 30, 1949, South Korean forces experienced over 500 clashes with communist partisans and over 250 incidents involving Korean People's Army and Republic of Korea army soldiers along the border.<sup>59</sup> Limited border attacks and internal instability may have sounded an alarm for US policy makers, but the Truman Administration remained steadfast in its strategy of relying on training and advising Korean security forces vice the use of US combat troops on the Korean peninsula. US intelligence reports weathered several cries of "wolf" from the South Koreans, who were in a perpetual state of fear of a North Korean invasion. Further Korean People's Army troop movement towards the border

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<sup>59</sup> Millet, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951: They Came from the North*, 199.



became the norm by 1950.<sup>60</sup> Intelligence officers did know that in January of 1950, Kim Il-Sung secured Stalin's tacit approval for an invasion with the caveat that Kim needed to secure Mao's blessing first. Stalin also would not "lift a finger" if the Korean People's Army suffered defeat; that would have to come from Mao.<sup>61</sup>

Meanwhile US advisors faced the stark reality of training and building an indigenous force that faced a Maoist Phase 2 insurgency. Because South Korea and United States Armed Forces in Korea identified the immediate threat as guerilla forces in South Korea, they tailored their training and equipment at the expense of meeting the conventional threat across the border. Training and equipping Korean security forces proved effective at suppressing lightly armed guerillas within South Korea, but could not compare to the materiel the Soviet Union provided the North Koreans. At the time of the invasion, North Korea possessed 242 T-34 tanks, 211 airplanes, and over 500 artillery pieces compared to a paltry total of 0 tanks, 22 airplanes, and 94 artillery pieces for the South Koreans, with no adequate anti-tank capability.<sup>62</sup> US advisors acknowledged the Republic of Korea Army's lack of preparedness for a conventional threat, as they were incapable of operating above the platoon and company level.<sup>63</sup>

US policy in South Korea evolved from disarming and removing an occupying colonial power to establishing a democratic state in the face of its Communist counterpart in the north. Recognizing the difficulties of establishing a democracy that appeared legitimate in the eyes of the Korean people, the United States sought a United Nations commission to oversee democratic elections in 1948. This facilitated a drawdown of US combat troops in Korea, leaving a small

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<sup>60</sup> Cummings, *The Origins of the Korean War: Liberation and the Emergence of Separate Regimes, 1945-1947*, 449.

<sup>61</sup> Jager, *Brothers at War: The Unending Conflict in Korea*, 61-62.

<sup>62</sup> Korea Institute of Military History, *The Korean War: Volume 1*, 147-48.

<sup>63</sup> Sawyer, *Military Advisors in Korea: KMAG in Peace and War*, ed. Walter G. Hermes, 70.

contingent of advisors to establish a credible indigenous security force. It also allowed Truman to begin decreasing the defense budget during an election year where the “Red Scare” had yet to reach its nadir and before the Soviets had developed an atomic bomb.

The United States took its eye off South Korea in favor of rebuilding Western Europe, oblivious to the warning signs of a persistent Communist insurgency and frequent border clashes between North and South Korean soldiers. Though Rhee frequently warned of a pending invasion, US officials took this assessment with a grain of salt. Rhee remained unequivocal of his policy of unification and wanted a military to achieve that policy. The United States, whose policy was the maintenance of the status quo of two Korea’s, sensibly denied Rhee this capability as this could open the door for direct Chinese, or worse, Soviet involvement. Denying Rhee a stronger military, however, doomed South Korea to an Army incapable of defending itself. The “trusteeship,” it appeared, was questionable. The United States did not maintain a consistent alignment of interests with its partnered nation, Korea. The US underestimated the strength of the Korean People’s Army while Rhee’s ambitions seemed agnostic of the strategic implications of reunification. This compounded the problem of training and equipping the partnered nation’s military commensurate to the threats it faced, resulting in South Korea’s inability to secure its borders. Table 2 illustrates the assessed variables, with an imbalanced focus on counterinsurgency training and divergence of interests between the US and the Korean government. The outcome resulted in military failure.

#### Korea Variables

Case Study	Commonality of Regional Interests $x_1$ (Convergent, Divergent)	Type of Training $x_2$ (CW, CI, Both)	Military Failure $y$ (Failure to control borders)
Korea 1945-1950	Divergent	CI	Yes

*Source:* Created by the author

## Iraq

Using Operation Iraqi Freedom as a case study requires the caveat that while the US military mission in Iraq concluded on January 31, 2011, it has since recommitted itself to fighting the trans-national terrorist group ISIL. This fight is symptomatic of a larger, complex problem of the internecine struggle within the Middle East. The object of this case study is not to delve into the current fight against ISIL or its strategy, but to examine the conditions the United States, Iraq, and other actors created that led to an Iraqi Army incapable of defending its own borders when it faced ISIL in Mosul in June 2014. Like Korea, the Iraq case study provides the strategic political context before the United States began providing security assistance to the partnered nation, followed by a narrative of events of the invasion and occupation, leading up to ISIL's seizure of Iraq's second largest city, Mosul. The case study will then examine internal and external threats Iraq faced and whether the training and equipment provided were sufficient to meet those threats.

The strategic context of Operation Iraqi Freedom requires an understanding of President George W. Bush's national security team and how it responded to the terrorist attacks on 9/11. The attacks forced the administration to shift its foreign policy priorities from missile defense and Iraq to Al Qaeda and Afghanistan.<sup>64</sup> Before NATO forces removed the Taliban from power in Afghanistan during the initial stages of Operation Enduring Freedom, however, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld ordered United States Central Command to begin identifying resource requirements for an invasion of Iraq.<sup>65</sup> By December 2001, NATO forces led by the United States managed to topple the Taliban regime using special operations forces, airpower, other governmental agencies, and a loose alliance of indigenous forces. This quick and decisive victory over the Taliban initially appeared to play into Rumsfeld's plan of transforming the US military

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<sup>64</sup> Michael R. Gordon and General Bernard E. Trainor (R), *Cobra II: The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq* (New York: Vintage Books, 2007), 15.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

from its heavy, slow-to-deploy formations into a light, rapidly-deployable force capable of winning decisive victories without a costly troop requirement.

The “Afghanistan” model” of military intervention, along with Rumsfeld’s vision of transformation, permeated the philosophy behind the planning process for invading Iraq.<sup>66</sup> Indeed, Central Command planners anticipated the need for additional troops to secure Iraq until the Iraqis established a new government, which drew stern opposition from Secretary Rumsfeld and the Office of Secretary Defense.<sup>67</sup> Rumsfeld envisioned another rapid, decisive victory as in Afghanistan, which did not require a significant commitment of ground forces to win the peace.<sup>68</sup>

While the intra-agency discourse between Rumsfeld and Central Command took place, an interagency fight raged between the Department of Defense and Department of State over who would assume the responsibility as the lead agency in post-war reconstruction. Rumsfeld acknowledged that Defense was more adequately structured to handle the development and implementation of post-war policy, but remained hesitant over officially establishing an office that would deal with that task, questioning the utility of post-war planning while the United States still sought a diplomatic solution to Iraq.<sup>69</sup> Though various agencies conducted multiple studies and policy discussions on a post-war Iraq, Defense did not officially establish an organization to coordinate the post-war efforts until January 2003, a little over two months before the invasion of

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<sup>66</sup> Fred Kaplan, *The Insurgents: David Petraeus and the Plot to Change the American Way of War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2013), 58.

<sup>67</sup> Gordon and Trainor, *Cobra II: The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq*, 112.

<sup>68</sup> Deliberations made for the amount of ground forces required for the Iraq invasion mostly took place in the fall of 2002, well before an established insurgency in Afghanistan could disprove Rumsfeld’s case for cutting the overall number of troops to initially send to Iraq.

<sup>69</sup> Bob Woodward, *Bush at War, Part III: State of Denial* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2006), 91.

Iraq.<sup>70</sup>

The disjointed planning and coordination efforts played out in the months following the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime. The United States lacked a clear plan to transition authority from the military to an interim Iraqi government. Looting became rampant without enough coalition forces on the ground. Iraqi citizens became frustrated with the coalition's failure to provide security and essential services. In May 2003, the senior US official in charge of the reconstruction project, L. Paul "Jerry" Bremer, issued two decrees that exacerbated Iraqi tensions. One called for a comprehensive "de-Baathification" of all former Saddam regime officials, a policy that essentially gutted the sinews of the Iraqi bureaucracy. The second was a decree that completely disbanded the Iraqi Defense and Interior Ministries, which put hundreds of thousands of Iraqis out of work, increased the population base from which insurgent groups could recruit, and forced Coalition forces to begin their security force assistance from scratch.<sup>71</sup>

Starting from scratch required a headquarters separate from the day-to-day operations whose sole purpose was to organize, train, and equip an Iraqi security force that could defend its borders from both external and internal threats. Central Command thus created a sub-unified command, Multi-National Forces-Iraq, and two subordinate commands. One subordinate command, Multi-National Corps-Iraq, ran the day-to-day operations of the coalition and the other, Multi-National Security Transition Command-Iraq, assumed the mission to organize, train, and equip Iraqi forces.<sup>72</sup> The purpose behind the creation of Multi-National Security Transition

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<sup>70</sup> United States Office of the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, *Hard Lessons: The Iraq Reconstruction Experience* (Washington DC: US Government Printing Office, 2009), 35.

<sup>71</sup> Woodward, *Bush at War, Part III: State of Denial*, 194.

<sup>72</sup> United States Office of the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, *Hard Lessons: The Iraq Reconstruction Experience*, 193.

Command-Iraq revealed the concern Secretary Rumsfeld and others held that Coalition forces would try to do too much instead of the Iraqis taking ownership of the security of their own country.<sup>73</sup> Former Central Command Commander, General John Abizaid, likened the presence of US forces in Iraq to an “antibody,” necessitating a swift transition of security responsibilities.<sup>74</sup>

A swift transition, however, required credible Iraqi security forces capable of dealing with a growing number of insurgencies with competing agendas. In 2004, Iraqi Interim Prime Minister Ayad Allawi informed incoming Multi-National Forces-Iraq Commander General Casey he wanted an army capable of rapidly projecting armored forces across the country to deal with the manifold threats the country faced.<sup>75</sup> Far from monolithic, these threats were, in part, a manifestation of differing interpretations of Islam, oppression from Saddam Hussein’s Ba’athist regime, and various political factions vying for power as Iraq slowly began building a government.<sup>76</sup> They were also a manifestation of the larger regional problem of Iran attempting to exert its influence by providing training and resources to various Shia factions within Iraq. Sunni and Shia factions clashed with each other and against Coalition Forces. Sunni factions targeted government institutions, particularly Iraqi Army and Police recruiting and training venues. Establishing any type of security force, regardless of whether designed to fight an insurgency or a conventional force, proved daunting.

In the meantime, the “antibody” had its work cut out for it. The initial plan recognized the importance of transitioning authority over to Iraqi forces as quickly as possible. As commander of

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<sup>73</sup> George W. Casey, Jr., *Strategic Reflections: Operation Iraqi Freedom July 2004-January 2007* (Washington DC: National Defense University Press, 2012), 13.

<sup>74</sup> Gordon and Trainor, *Cobra II: The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq*, 187.

<sup>75</sup> Casey, *Strategic Reflections: Operation Iraqi Freedom July 2004-January 2007*, 15.

<sup>76</sup> Ahmed S. Hashim, *Iraq’s Sunni Insurgency* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 18-19.

Multi-National Security Transition Command-Iraq, General Petraeus and his staff concluded that in 2004, Iraqi security forces were neither equipped nor trained to combat the insurgent threat they faced.<sup>77</sup> Petraeus and Casey assessed that the Iraqis needed a substantially larger force within the Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Defense, consisting of a mix of general and special purpose units that could deal with current threats.<sup>78</sup>

Sectarian tensions escalated in February 2006 when Sunni insurgents blew up the Golden Dome Mosque in Samarra, a sacred Shia site. As a result, violence levels spiked in the summer of 2006. Coalition Forces found as many as 100 dead bodies in a single day in Baghdad alone.<sup>79</sup> Even more disturbing were reports of Iraqi units taking part in wanton murder and intimidation.<sup>80</sup> General Casey's strategy of quickly standing up Iraqi Security Forces so they could quickly assume responsibility of their country seemed to be faltering and in desperate need of a course correction. As the sectarian violence began to spike, Congress ordered a bi-partisan commission to analyze the overall strategy and operations of Operation Iraqi Freedom, also known as the Iraq Study Group. The group, co-chaired by James A. Baker III and Lee H. Hamilton, represented foreign policy experts from both sides of the aisle, and interviewed hundreds of personnel from inside and outside the Bush Administration. The report, released on December 2006, recommended a decrease in US combat units, an increase in units with a train and advise mission, and a restructuring of the strategic framework for the region that acknowledged regional actors such as Iran and the influence they held over Shia militias.<sup>81</sup> The Iraq Study Group also

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<sup>77</sup> United States Office of the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, *Hard Lessons: The Iraq Reconstruction Experience*, 193.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 194-197.

<sup>79</sup> Gordon and Trainor, *End Game: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama* (New York: Vintage Books, 2012), 228.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 147.

<sup>81</sup> James A. Baker III and Lee H. Hamilton, et al., *The Iraq Study Group Report: The Way*

recommended intensifying Casey's strategy of handing over security responsibility to quality Iraqi units.

Retired Army Vice Chief of Staff, General Jack Keane, viewed the problem differently and helped shape a counter-argument that changed the course of the war. Keane proved instrumental in organizing a group of senior officers working at the Pentagon known as the Council of Colonels.<sup>82</sup> The group developed, in part, what became the intellectual underpinning that redefined the problem in Iraq, acknowledging that the Coalition was facing both a complex insurgency and a rising civil war.<sup>83</sup> Insurgent groups held competing agendas, including al Qaeda's Iraq branch and Iranian-fueled insurgent forces such as Badr Corps and the Mahdi Army. Findings from the Council of Colonels confirmed Keane's assessment- in order to secure Iraq, the United States needed to increase the number of troops to quell the level of violence. The United States also needed to provide the Iraqi government time to institute political reforms aimed at a more inclusive government, one that involved Sunni and Kurd minorities, and space to grow its own credible security force.

After taking into consideration the differing points of view on Iraq and how the United States would shape its future, President George W. Bush announced on January 10, 2007, an increase of 20,000 troops, including five combat brigades, to help secure the population.<sup>84</sup> Bush selected General David Petraeus, the former 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (Air Assault) and Multi-

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*Forward—A New Approach* (New York: Vintage Books, 2006), 71.

<sup>82</sup> Bob Woodward, *The War Within: A Secret White House History, 2006-2008* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2008), 145.

<sup>83</sup> Gordon and Trainor, *End Game: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama*, 286.

<sup>84</sup> George W. Bush, "President's Address to the Nation," January 10, 2007, accessed March 18, 2016, <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2007/01/20070110-7.html>.



National Security Transition Command-Iraq Commander, to replace General Casey. Charged with securing Baghdad and its outlying belts around the city, Petraeus and his staff began carrying out plans to disperse their forces so that they were not concentrated on large forward operating bases.<sup>85</sup> As Coalition forces pushed out into the Sunni-controlled belts of Baghdad, levels in violence began to spike. One week in August 2007 saw attacks in Iraq drive to 1,600 in one week.<sup>86</sup> Just as Petraeus and the US Ambassador to Iraq, Ryan Crocker, were getting ready to testify in early September, however, it appeared as though violence levels had peaked and were beginning to drop. Though it wasn't an overnight occurrence, some speculate that the reduction in violence from the Sunni insurgency in particular was due to both the willingness of Sunni moderates to take a stand against the brutal tactics of al Qaeda Iraq, and the increased presence of US troops from the surge.<sup>87</sup>

Though there was a reduction in the levels of violence in Iraq during the surge in 2007-2008, it is important to keep in mind that the reason behind the surge was so that Coalition and Iraqi forces could create enough time for the Iraqi government to undergo reconciliation between Sunni and Shia divisions. One major flaw in that reconciliation was the perception that Prime Minister Maliki and his Shia-led Dawa Party were tough on Sunni insurgents but not Shia militias. Maliki sought to counter this perception in March 2008 by developing a campaign plan in one of the Shia militia strongholds in Basra. In an attempt to root out the Iranian-backed Mahdi Army in the city, Maliki and his generals initiated a poorly executed operation that ultimately

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<sup>85</sup> Bob Woodward, *The War Within: A Secret White House History, 2006-2008*, 330.

<sup>86</sup> Gordon and Trainor, *End Game: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama*, 430.

<sup>87</sup> For a more in-depth analysis on how the surge in Iraq led to an overall reduction in violence in Iraq, see Stephen Biddle, Jeffrey A. Friedman, and Jacob N. Shapiro, "Testing the Surge: Why Did Violence Decline in Iraq 2007," *International Security* 37, no. 1 (Summer 2012): 7-40.

relied heavily on Coalition airpower and fire support officers. A poor logistical plan forced Iraqi soldiers to forage for food, ammunition, and gasoline.<sup>88</sup> After nearly two weeks of fighting, the Mahdi Army accepted a temporary ceasefire. Though this lent Maliki enough credibility to forge ahead with rebuilding his country with a government that backed him, it foreshadowed the issues Iraqi Security Forces would have in conducting combined arms maneuver against a moderately armed force.

As the end of President Bush's second term drew near, Bush and Maliki both wanted a status of forces agreement that established the primacy of Iraqi security forces in the lead with a temporary presence of US forces in a secondary role as advisors. The status of forces agreement, signed on December 14, 2008, called for US forces to remain out of major Iraqi cities in July 2009, with a complete withdrawal by December 31, 2011.<sup>89</sup> During this period of transition, US forces increased the number of advisors, augmenting Brigade Combat Teams with fifty to sixty field grade officers and senior Non-Commissioned Officers known as Security Force Assistance Teams. These teams advised brigade and division-sized Iraqi units while Brigade Combat Teams provided training and assistance during operations at Iraqi request. This new phase of the Iraq war provided the Obama Administration enough breathing room to focus on the war in Afghanistan as well as the President's domestic agenda, which included addressing an economic recession.

This period also provided Maliki room for political maneuvering by firing senior military officers with years of professional experience and replacing them with men who were loyal to Maliki.<sup>90</sup> His mixed record on bridging the Sunni and Shia sectarian divide made his critics

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<sup>88</sup> Gordon and Trainor, *End Game: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama*, 477.

<sup>89</sup> Gordon and Trainor, *End Game: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama*, 557.

<sup>90</sup> Ali Khedery, "Why We Stuck With Maliki-And Lost Iraq," *The Washington Post*, July 3, 2014, accessed March 21, 2016, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/why-we-stuck->

worry. Although both senior military and civilian leadership in Iraq and at US Central Command had their misgivings about Maliki, the Obama Administration backed Maliki as their way forward, and, more importantly, their ticket out of Iraq.<sup>91</sup> As US presence in Iraq dwindled, Maliki continued to crack down on dissenters, establishing the Office of the Commander-in-Chief, which gave him direct control over the country's security forces.<sup>92</sup>

More unsettling than all of this, however, and an indicator of how US and Iraqi interests diverged, was the role Iran held in keeping Maliki in office. In the March 2010 election, Ayad Allawi, a secular, pro-Western politician, received the majority of the vote, but could not raise enough support from other parties to form a coalition government. Iran wanted Maliki to remain in power due to his ties with the Iranian government, established when Maliki was working as part of the opposition to Saddam. To ensure Maliki stayed in power, Iran's chief Quds Force officer, General Qassem Suleimani, brokered a deal with other Shia factions on the condition that Maliki would press for US forces to leave by the status of forces agreement's deadline.<sup>93</sup> The budding divergence between US and Iraqi interests began to bear fruit.

Although the Obama Administration took note of Maliki's crackdown on political dissenters, it continued to distance itself from Iraq. When the deadline to withdraw US troops from Iraq drew near, senior US and Iraqi officials revisited the possibility of extending the deadline. In Baghdad, US and Iraqi officials worked tirelessly to update the current status of forces agreement and allow a small contingent of US advisors to operate in Baghdad to serve as a

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with-maliki--and-lost-iraq/2014/07/03/0dd6a8a4-f7ec-11e3-a606-946fd632f9f1\_story.html.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Dexter Filkins, "What We Left Behind," *The New Yorker*, April 28, 2014, accessed March 21, 2014, <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/04/28/what-we-left-behind>.

<sup>93</sup> Dexter Filkins, "The Shadow Commander," *The New Yorker*, September 30, 2013, accessed March 23, 2016, <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2013/09/30/the-shadow-commander>.

counter to Maliki's sectarian leanings. Some argued that a continued US presence would prevent any further sectarian divisions and deter Maliki from abusing his authority.<sup>94</sup> But when it appeared US officials finally elicited Iraqi approval of an extended US presence, the White House began to rethink its proposal. Obama officials remained inflexible when it came to negotiating immunity for US citizens operating in Iraq.<sup>95</sup> Additionally, a growing deficit, the surge in Afghanistan, and a struggling economy all contributed to President Obama's decision not to seek an extension on US troops in Iraq. By December 31, 2011, all US troops, except a small office for coordinating security cooperation activities at the US embassy in Baghdad, had left.

With no senior US leadership present in Iraq to engage on a daily basis with the Iraqi government, Maliki continued exercise his power over Sunni dissidents. The Syrian civil war, with President Bashar al Assad's brutal response to what was once a group of peaceful protesters, deepened regional sectarian animosity. The once marginalized Islamic State of Iraq, a Sunni insurgent group and precursor to ISIL, took advantage of the ungoverned spaces in Syria and the oppressive Shia governments of Iraq and Syria to grow into the transnational terrorist organization it is today. In the winter and spring of 2014, ISIL made territorial gains in Iraq, seizing two key Sunni cities in the al Anbar Province.<sup>96</sup>

In June 2014, with approximately 800 men in pickup trucks and local Sunni militias, ISIL attacked into northern Iraq, seizing another key Sunni line of communication and Iraq's second largest city, Mosul.<sup>97</sup> The Iraqi Army, trained and equipped by the United States and other

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Gordon and Trainor, *End Game: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama*, 670.

<sup>96</sup> Christopher M. Blanchard and Carla E. Humud, *The Islamic State and US Policy*, CRS Report R43612 (Washington DC: Congressional Research Service, February 9, 2016), 11.

<sup>97</sup> "The Rise of ISIS," *PBS: Frontline*, produced by Linda Hirsch and Martin Smith, aired October 28, 2014, accessed March 23, 2016, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/rise-of-isis/>.

Coalition partners, retreated in complete disarray when faced with a lightly armed force. Training and equipping the Iraqis with US oversight was one thing; conducting operations on their own without US logistical or firepower support was entirely different. Though ISIL is by no means a conventional force, it possessed enough mass and mobility, which overwhelmed the Iraqi Army. Conducting combined arms maneuver at the battalion level and above is a complicated task for any army, conducting it in densely populated urban environment adds an entirely different dimension. Since the collapse of Mosul, US and Coalition airpower, direct action, and other forms of aid have forced ISIL to relinquish approximately 40% of the territory once held in Iraq.<sup>98</sup> Coalition forces continue to train Iraq's security forces for the impending assault on Mosul, an event intended to contribute to the reestablishment of Iraq's international borders.

### **Iraq Analysis**

Finding a commonality of interests between the United States and Iraq requires a holistic appreciation of US involvement in Iraq's future. The United States and United Kingdom justified the invasion of Iraq and removal Saddam's Baathist regime because of the perceived imminent threat of weapons of mass destruction. The Coalition's goal was to rapidly establish a government the Iraqi people deemed fair, one that was capable of maintaining its own sovereignty from internal and external threats. Those assumptions, however, proved demonstrably false. The lack of any functioning government with a security apparatus exacerbated preexisting sectarian tensions; the oppressive Baathist (and mostly Sunni) minority had become the oppressed.

This created an opportunity for Iran to extend its influence into another country with a dominant Shia population. Meanwhile, al Qaeda, after suffering a temporary setback after the dismantling of the Taliban in Afghanistan, found a new battleground against its Western enemies while tapping into the now disenfranchised and disavowed former Baathists in Iraq. With US and

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<sup>98</sup> Blanchard and Humud, *The Islamic State and US Policy*, 2.

Coalition forces caught in the middle, this created a maelstrom of violence—Sunni attacking Shia, Shia attacking Sunni, all attacking the Coalition.

Through this complex cycle of internecine conflict, US interests remained constant to the foundation of a secure and stable Iraq that embraced its own form of an inclusive and democratic government. President George W. Bush placed his faith firmly in the “transformative power of freedom and the belief that people, if just given a chance, will choose free societies.”<sup>99</sup> As long as the United States remained engaged with Iraqi leadership, the Iraqi government largely took steps toward this vision, albeit with a few setbacks. But the United States footprint in Iraq had an expiration date on it. Once the United States left, the Iraqi government did not remain true to US intentions of an inclusive, central government. Iraq’s military reflected the divided society it protected. Indeed, the sudden departure of US trainers and advisors led to increased politicization and corruption of Iraq’s security forces, forcing practitioners to come to terms with the question of how to provide for success once trainers and advisors leave.<sup>100</sup>

Assessing the military failure of Iraq and its inability to secure its borders requires a look at not just the type of training Iraq’s military received, but the degree to which sectarianism played in the Iraqi Army’s collapse. While it is correct to assess that Iraq’s security forces did not receive a balance in both conventional and counterinsurgency training, the sectarian division that pervaded Iraqi society ran congruent with its security forces. By firing professionally competent officers and replacing them people loyal to him, Maliki undermined the credibility of his forces. This added dimension of sectarianism within Iraq’s security forces presents a dynamic that influenced the outcomes. The United States focused on the fight it needed to win from 2003-

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<sup>99</sup> Woodward, *The War Within: A Secret White House History, 2006-2008*, 433.

<sup>100</sup> Anthony H. Cordesman, Daniel Dewit, and Sam Khazai, “Shaping Iraq’s Security Forces,” Center for Strategic and International Studies, December 16, 2013, accessed March 24, 2016, [http://csis.org/files/publication/140612\\_Shaping\\_Iraq\\_Security\\_Forces.pdf](http://csis.org/files/publication/140612_Shaping_Iraq_Security_Forces.pdf), 10.

2011. It could not anticipate the fight it was going to have to win, ISIL. This resulted in a partnered nation with an imbalanced capability. Given the lack of US support, the ensuing attack in Mosul resulted in military failure. Table 3 illustrates the two input variables, their assessment for this case study, and the output variable.

Iraq Variables

Case Study	Commonality of Regional Interests $x_1$ (Convergent, Divergent)	Type of Training $x_2$ (CW, CI, Both)	Military Failure $y$ (Failure to control borders)
Iraq	Divergent	CI	Yes

*Source:* Created by the author

### Conclusion

Building partnership capacity will likely remain an integral part of shaping and deterring threats in the operating environment. The United States military continuously conducts security cooperation activities in support of the Geographic Combatant Commands. Reasons for conducting security cooperation activities are manifold and vary based on bilateral and multilateral interests between the United States and its partnered nations. Often, the United States and partnered nations have clearly stated and converging interests that Combatant Commanders can translate into tactical actions. At other times, this convergence of interests is fleeting and more nuanced, making it difficult to develop sustainable outcomes. Whether the interests are

clearly stated or not, conducting security assistance over an extended period requires constant reassessment and engagement with the partnered nation. It additionally requires constant update of threat assessments both internally and externally.

The occupation of Korea sought to secure Japan's western flank against Communist aggression, while fulfilling the agreement of a "trusteeship" over post-colonial countries in Asia. The bifurcation of Korea into two halves occupied by the United States and the Soviet Union exacerbated existing tensions over two competing visions for Korea. This led the United States to establish a training headquarters aimed at stabilizing South Korea's internal borders from Communist guerillas at the expense of developing capabilities to deter a growing threat in North Korea. Additionally, Rhee remained open about wanting a substantial force that could reunite the Korean peninsula, something the United States did not support.

Operation Iraqi Freedom saw the mismanagement of the war in its early stage which led to a near disaster. Sunni tribes managed to reverse insurgent gains by cooperating with Coalition forces. The addition of five Brigade Combat Teams also helped secure the belts around Baghdad, effectively reducing the amount of violence in the country which, in turn, provided enough time and space for Iraq to establish a working government. But the same training the Iraqis received in counterinsurgency also ill-prepared them for a large, more centralized force that could mass an assault on Iraq's 2<sup>nd</sup> largest city of Mosul. Additionally, the Iraqi government's ties with Iran through backdoor channels revealed a divergence of interests between itself and the United States, and helped shape the eventual drawdown of US forces.

Effective security cooperation requires continuous assessment and the ability to forecast the implications these activities have on regional actors. The United States must first define its own objectives and end states while taking regional and global implications of its actions into consideration. The United States must also anticipate internal and regional threats to the partnered nation, and ensure the partnered nation as a set of balanced capabilities to face both.





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